

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS IN ST. JAMES'S.

On Saturday an inquisition was held in Fenton's Hotel, before the Under-Sheriff of the county of Middlesex and a jury of fifteen gentlemen, to decide whether the crown, the public, or others, would suffer any detriment from certain improvements which it is meant to make in the parish of St. James's.

Mr. Adolphus, jun., appeared for the trustees of the Duke of Bridgewater, and Mr. Pemberton for the Commissioners of Woods and Forests.

Mr. Adolphus stated the facts of the case upon which the jury would have to decide, whether or not the crown, or any person, would suffer damage or prejudice in any way by the Duke of Bridgewater's trustees (the Archbishop of Canterbury, Earl of Devon, Mr. James Loch, and Lord Francis Egerton) stopping up and enclosing a high street or thoroughfare, known by the name of Catherine Wheel-yard, which leads from Cleveland-row into Little St. James's-street. It was proposed by the trustees of the Duke of Bridgewater, that in compensation for what was thus meant to be taken away, they should give greater benefits to the public, which, he was happy to say, it was in their power to give. They proposed to make a road from Little St. James's-street into the park, which would be a much greater boon to the public than that of which they meant to deprive it. The road they meant to make would be wider, more uniform, and much nearer; while he begged to remind the jury that the present road was constantly frequented by disreputable characters. No person in the neighbourhood, he was happy to say, objected to the proposed improvement; on the contrary, all feel it to be desirable. He had heard, however, that a gentleman was present to watch their proceedings on behalf of the crown. He (Mr. Adolphus) was sorry he did not hear of any intended opposition on the part of the crown until last night. He would now call some gentlemen before the jury who would give their opinion as to the desirableness of the proposed improvement.

Evidence having been adduced in support of the plan,

Mr. Pemberton argued that the proposed alterations would injure the property of the Crown by shutting up the present access to the gardens rented by Earl Spencer and Lord Francis Egerton, which were the property of the Crown. He had no doubt, however, that an arrangement satisfactory and advantageous to both parties would be come by the Crown with the trustees of the Bridgewater estates:

Mr. Adolphus contended that the Crown would suffer no injury whatever from the proposed alterations, as it had no property which could be rendered inaccessible where access could be desirable.

The Under-Sheriff summed up, telling the jury that they were not met to fix the amount of compensation which ought to be given to the Crown for any supposed damages, but simply whether any damage or prejudice would be sustained by the Crown or others, and if so, in what way.

The room was then cleared, and after deliberating for a short time, the jury returned the following verdict:—"The jury find that the benefit to the public would be considerable, and that no detriment would be sustained by the Crown; but in the opinion of the jury, if there were any, the advantages to the public would be outweighed by the alterations."

Mr. Pemberton objected to the verdict, observing that the jury ought to return it in accordance with the terms of the inquisition.

The Under-Sheriff also remarked to a similar effect, and said, that unless the finding of the verdict was in the terms of the writ, it was no finding. The verdict must be either that there would or would not be a damage or prejudice sustained by the Crown or any other persons, and no more.

The jury again had the room cleared, when, in about a quarter of an hour, the Under-Sheriff was informed that they had agreed.

The following verdict was returned:—"That there would be no damage or prejudice sustained by the Crown or any other person."

A GEM OF THE NORMAN ERA.

THE Church of Kilpeck, in Herefordshire, so remarkable for its antiquity and the profusion of sculptured enrichments with which it is adorned, is situate within about seven miles of the city of Hereford; mention of it occurs in Dugdale, in a transcript of one of the ancient dedicatory grants. "In 1134 Hugh, the son of William the Norman, gave Deo et Sancto Petro et monachis Glocestrie Ecclesiam S. David de Kilpeck, cum capella Beate Marie de Castella," &c. This edifice is doubtless of the Norman era, of which it is a singularly fine relic. The chancel, which terminates with a semi-circular apsis, and has a stone roof in the form of steps, is a rare example of approach in manner to the temples of the lower Roman empire. As a whole, this church may be called a cabinet of ancient sculpture, but which, alas! has undergone the barbarian process of whitewashing; the mop and pail, though not that of the Puritans, betrays, nevertheless, the vilest want of feeling, for so valuable and appealing a memorial of the very olden time. The architect has divided it into a nave, choir, and the chancel before mentioned, by two arches: the first most fantastically decorated with pillars on the sides, covered by reliefs. Those on the north have three caryatide figures placed on each other's heads; the upper, in a mantle and cap, bears a four-leaved flower; the next a book and a cap; the third a book and a branch of palm. These are repeated on the south pillar, which has an interlaced capital. The first arch, with a double moulding, is sculptured into lozenges and zigzags. The second arch is plain. The chancel, three sides of a hexagon, has double slender pillars on the angles, from which ribs of lozenges and semi-lozenges ascend to a group of hideous masks in the vault. The three arches, from the masks to the wall above the windows, are pointed; but those of the windows themselves are semi-circular, of double zigzag springing, from small pillars. The windows are similar to loop-holes, contracting in the depth of the wall, which is of very great thickness. The window in the west end of the church is bounded by two pillars, with capitals of masks holding embroidered sashes in their mouths; the shafts are covered with weathered mouldings, and the torus of the arch with the reticulated pattern. There are three windows on the north side, one of which is lancet-shaped, with a circular arch; the others have trefoil arches. The brackets or dentils under the roof are repetitions of the following curious representations—laced work, a head in chain armour, a stag, a hawk, a lion's head, two fishes, a satyr's head, a true lover's knot, and a head with another in the mouth. The corbel over the east window is the Agnus Dei.

The principal entrance to this church is on the south side of the nave through a wooden porch, and a semi-circular headed door-way, having coupled shafts at their sides, which, with their capitals, impostes, and transoms, are richly and elaborately sculptured into a variety of figures; amongst these may be discerned, through the whitewash, a man bearing a sword, another with palm leaves in his hand, serpents, heads, foliage, &c.; the whole is further adorned with the zigzag, starry, triple-indented, bead and cable mouldings.

THE WOLSEY ARCHITECTURE.

MUCH has been said about taste in domestic architecture, and many attempts have been made to establish a character for it, from the time Lord Burlington built Chiswick House, after a design of Palladio's Villa Capra, to the period of the erection of Fonthill Abbey, on the model of Ely Cathedral, and fifty old churches. I forbear to mention either the complete failures, or the partial accomplishments; but it will not be denied that no one has been entirely successful since the time of Cardinal Wolsey. He indeed produced many splendid examples of original taste, not Greek, not Roman, and certainly not Gothic. His knowledge of what was requisite in the habitation of a person of high degree was doubtless one of the reasons of the king's partiality to him. His edifices, which still remain, are eminently superior, notwithstanding their antiquity, to all others of their kind, in design and magni-

ficence, and his name is familiarly used to denote the highly enriched manner of building then, and afterwards used, during the reigns of the Tudors by the appellation of "The Wolsey Architecture." As an instance I shall mention Hampton Court, one of the superb edifices erected by the cardinal, which may be truly said to offer an unobjectionable model for a palace, one that if erected, would not only establish the fame of the architect, or clerk of the works, but would confer celebrity on the reign in which such a noble design was carried into execution. The peculiar style or order of architecture, adopted in every one of the mansions and colleges, erected by the munificence of the cardinal, is uniform and original, perfectly suited to the purpose of display. It is completely distinct from the ecclesiastical style, and includes a variety of elegant combinations admirably calculated for the use of the painter in historical composition, as marking the precise period of the subject throughout the Tudor reigns, as well as harmonizing with the extremely gorgeous costume then prevalent, and otherwise employing the fancy of the artist. In Wolsey's buildings the imposing simplicity of the graceful painted architecture that had for ages retained its sway, was united with arabesque ornaments skillfully introduced, together with a redundancy of quaint device, and heraldic enrichment of every kind. On the inner walls, gilding and colour were profusely lavished, so as to give a mosaic appearance to the spacious rooms which on state occasions were decorated with tapestry, as described by Wolsey's biographer in the preparation for a banquet. "The yeomen and grooms of the wardrobes were busied in hanging of the chambers with costly hangings, and furnishing the same with beds of silk and other furniture, apt for the same, in every degree." This practice was carried to greater excess in the reign of Elizabeth. In the "Fairie Queene" Spenser describes the hangings used:

"For round about, the walls y'clothed were
With goodly arras of great majesty,
Woven with gold and silke so close and nere,
That the rich metall lurked privily.
As faining to be hid, from envious eye.
Yet here and there, and every where unawares
It showed itself, and shone unwillingly.
Like to a discoloured snake, whose hidden snares,
Thro' the greene gras, his long, bright burnish'd
back declares."

—The Graphic Illustrator.

FIRES AT LIVERPOOL.

TWO recent extensive fires which have occurred in this town have induced the insurance offices to raise the premium of insurance to 11. 1s. per cent. upon old policies, whilst no new ones are to be taken. To assuage if possible this feeling of alarm, Mr. Abraham Booth has addressed a letter to the editor of the *Liverpool Albion*, pointing out that however mysterious the circumstances may appear, that they may be accounted for on natural causes. "We quote his words, to which we beg our readers' particular attention. "In the autumn of 1841, I delivered lectures at most of the metropolitan scientific institutions, on the 'Causes and Prevention of Fires in the Metropolis.' At the time of my lectures at the Cadogan Institution, fires in haystacks were very rife in the agricultural districts, all of which were the suspected work of incendiaries. I however explained that the peculiar circumstances of the condition in which the crops were gathered, and the electrical state of the atmosphere, had a great deal to do as the causes of these fires, and that the condition in which the hay was gathered was such as to render it liable to spontaneous ignition. I also stated that disaffected spirits might be stimulated by these accidental occurrences, and extend the mischief by becoming actual incendiaries. I may apply the same remark of the chemical and electrical state of the atmosphere and the condition of the crops to the cotton supply from America. The Committee of Investigation should in my opinion first direct their attention to this, as it would not be impossible by investigation to determine the exact condition of those crops, from the examination of the samples. It is well known that cotton, with moisture alone, is liable to spontaneous combustion. According to the reports in the newspapers, there has been actual detection in one case, of an attempt at incendiarism; but may not this, as with the haystacks, have been only an imitation of the operation of natural causes?" There seems to be much force in these remarks, and for the alleviation of the public anxiety, which is intense on the subject, the suggestions ought to be attended to.